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What caused the Palestinian refugees?

Anyone remotely interested in the Arab-Israeli conflict is well aware of the debate still raging about what caused the Palestinian Arab exodus during the 1948 War. Only two years after the end of the war in 1951 the UN observed "The reasons for their flight are still a point of bitter dispute between the contending parties"¹ and the same is true today. While one extreme side of the spectrum accuses Israel of expelling Arabs to ethnically cleanse Israel, the other contends Arab leadership both locally and abroad ordered the Arab inhabitants out of the way so they would not be harmed while the Arabs attempted another genocide against the Jewish population. As is often the case, neither extreme on its own is accurate and it was instead a number of instigating factors leading to the final refugee count.

It should be emphasized, however, that any specific factors that can be identified to explain why the Arabs fled their homes are but the offspring of war. When one pans out a bit from micro-analyzing why they fled, answering the question becomes quite obvious. It was war; the war Palestinian militias with assistance from foreign irregular troops launched the day after the United Nations voted to grant the Jews a state, and the conventional military invasion that followed after Israel declared their independence. Regardless of whether the Jews violently expelled the Palestinian Arabs in the midst of this war, or whether the Arab leadership demanded they flee their homes, had there not been an Arab invasion Israel would have been given no excuse to force out Palestinians and there would have been nothing for the Palestinians to flee from. This is simple cause and effect.

There is certainly nothing inappropriate about examining the individual reasons for the flight of refugees. The problem, of course, arises when for political reasons, only the most unsavory instigation is mentioned to the exclusion of all other factors involved. In the case of the Palestinian refugees, that some of them were expelled by Israel within the war has become such a focal point of so many critics, any other factors are scarcely mentioned. In other words, one of the tactics employed by Israel to win the war has become more reprehensible than the Arab decision to wage it; the Israeli decision to expel more dastardly than the Arab decision to invade.

For example:

- Don Atapattu with The Nation posed the following question during an interview with Avi Shlaim: "The invasion of Lebanon aside, the level of violence against civilians that Sharon has been responsible for is well below that of the Zionist leadership in 1948 under David Ben-Gurion, when three-quarters of the Palestinians were expelled or forced to flee."²
- In a recounted discussion between Benjamin Schiff (author of "Refugees unto the Third Generation" cited above) and Gordon Clapp (chairman of the U.S. Tennessee Valley Authority who studied economic conditions in the Near East after the 1948 Palestine war), "I asked Clapp what was going to be done about the 'black scourge of the East,' the ubiquitous goat. Israel has solved this problem by running most of the Arabs and their goats out of its territory."³
- In a debate titled "How can Peace be Achieved Between Israelis and Palestinians?" held at UC Berkeley, one Alison Weir opened with the following statement after claiming to have studied the issue for 3 years: "People often call the Israeli-Palestinian issue 'complicated.' It is not. The central problem is quite straight forward: a little over fifty years ago 3/4 of an entire population was expelled from its land to make way for an ethnically discriminatory state. And this process is still going on. Palestinians are being continuously and violently dispossessed because of one original sin: inhabiting land that others wanted-exclusively."⁴
- "60 years ago, 750,000 Palestinians were brutally expelled from their homeland, suffering persecution, massacres, and torture."⁵
- "The idea was to uproot as many Palestinians as possible. From March 1948 until the end of that year the plan was implemented despite the attempt by some Arab states to oppose it, which failed. Some 750,000 Palestinians were expelled, 531 villages were destroyed and 11 urban neighbourhoods demolished."⁶

- "On the eve of declaring statehood on 14 May 1948, Zionist forces expelled half of the population of what became Israel before the state was created and while the British Mandate government was supposedly protecting the people and land of historic Palestine."⁷

As you can see, the conclusion that Palestinian Arabs were primarily or exclusively expelled is being built-in to the discussion as if there could be no dispute⁸. These are the people who intentionally deprive the Arab invasion of its significance (the root cause of the refugees) and focus instead on one of its consequences (expulsions) as the main issue. Ignoring the cause and scrutinizing only one of the effects is of course done to remove culpability from the Arab's actions and place them instead on the Jews' reactions. That is politics, not history.

"There were multiple and varied reasons for the increased numbers of Palestinian Arab refugees. Among them were the physical ravages of war, breakdown of law and order, elimination of employment opportunities, growing panic fed by real and perceived tales of Zionist atrocities, a definite intent by Israeli leaders to minimize the number of Arabs who would ultimately be present in a Jewish state, and a Palestinian desire to protect self and family. ... The preponderance of historical evidence suggests that all the above factors contributed to the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem ..."⁹

"The exodus of Palestinian Arabs resulted from panic created by fighting in their communities, by rumours concerning real or alleged acts of terrorism, or expulsion."¹⁰

"Very few historians would accept the claim that all of the refugees, or even most of them, were deliberately expelled by the Israelis any more than they would accept the Israeli counterclaim that all left of their own accord."¹¹

Let it be said from the beginning that Israeli expulsions of Palestinian Arabs did occur and directly created more refugees than there otherwise would have been. Israel did not expel *all* the refugees or even *most* of the refugees, but they did expel some. Along with the expulsions, numerous other factors can be identified that led to the Palestinian Arab's decision to flee their homes. Due to the political tinderbox that is the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs, I have addressed this issue on its own here: [The Expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs](#). The remainder of this page will concern all the other catalysts responsible for prompting the flight of Palestinian Arabs from their homes which are:

- [The war itself](#)
- [Abuse of local Palestinian populations by fellow Arabs](#)
- [Dissolution of Arab leadership](#)
- [Fear of retribution](#)
- [Arab appeals/demands to flee](#)
- [Exaggerations and rumors](#)
- [Aversion to living in a Jewish State](#)

The War Itself:

Briefly touched upon above, wars create refugees. Before we can analyze the behavior and choices (and the morality of such choices) of either party to the conflict during the war, we have to first admit that had the Arabs chosen a peaceful means of dealing with the state of Israel, war would not have ensued and the refugee problem would never have become an issue in the first place. The decision for war was exclusively Arab. It was up to them to decide whether the situation in Palestine necessitated violence and chose in the affirmative. I am not here condemning or defending the choice to fight, I am simply pointing out that it was, in fact, a choice rather than a necessity, and a choice the Jewish community in Palestine was not given. A war was thrust upon them, so they fought. Because of this reason, the lion's share of the blame for the subsequent effects of war, which includes the Palestinian Arab refugees, lies with the Arab decision for war.

When making such a decision it should have been obvious that with war come refugees regardless of the behavior on either side. In such an atmosphere, whether there be atrocities or no atrocities, whether war crimes or no war crimes, people will flee and most responsibility for the flight of these people can only be placed on the shoulders of the aggressors, in this case, the local Palestinian militias and hostiles, and later the armies of (primarily) Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.

Quite significantly, although there was a war being waged, "A mass psychosis developed which resulted in the abandonment of Arab villages, frequently even before they were threatened by the progress of war."¹² Also, the U.N. "was informed that two to three hundred thousand people had fled before the end of the British Mandate."¹³ This is roughly half of the **total number of refugees created during the 1948 Palestine War** that fled in anticipation of the Arab invasion even before the British were gone. Such information is obviously damaging to the people quoted above and like-minded individuals who want no explanation for the refugees apart from Israeli "ethnic cleansing".

"The Palestinians fled for many reasons and from many threats, both real and imaginary, and that thousands upon thousands fled when nobody pushed them. As an example, when my unit occupied the abandoned British police station at Sidn'a Ali in the Sharon Plain, British troops were still stationed in the vicinity, and we had to train and patrol with our few guns (antiquated or homemade) concealed. Nevertheless, the Arabs of Sidn'a Ali were long gone, way before we could have pushed them out, and while the Brits were still in place to protect them from us."⁶⁴⁰

In addition to the actual violence war brings, those who might otherwise try to stick it out are effected by other war zone conditions including a breakdown in the economy as well as a general atmosphere of anarchy. Quite a few of the major cities such as Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem as well as dozens of smaller villages within Palestine suffered from massive inflation with the costs of basic necessities such as bread and clean water exponentially rising in price. Looting and vandalism were rampant. All of this contributed to more and more locals leaving.

"... the Arab exodus was not propelled only by the war-making and direct Arab and Jewish policies or actions. The changing economic circumstances also contributed. Almost from the first, the less-organized Arab economy was hard-hit. ... The separation of the two populations during the first weeks of fighting resulted in an economic divorce - cutting off many Arabs from their Jewish workplaces and closing the Jewish marketplace to Arab goods, especially agricultural products. ... By early March 1948, commerce in Jaffa was reported at a standstill and fuel was scarce; speculation and acts of robbery were rife ... By early April, flour was in short supply in Jaffa and Haifa (and Acre). Unemployment soared. The flight of the Arab middle class, which resulted in the closure of workshops and businesses, contributed to unemployment, as did the gradual shutdown of the British administration. All the Arab banks had closed by the end of April. Prices - of flour, petrol, and other basic goods - also soared. ... The hostilities led to supply problems, especially in the towns. Arab public transportation gradually ground to a halt."¹⁴

Abuse of local populace from foreign militias:

Before and during the battles came foreign irregular soldiers from Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon whose treatment of the local Arab population was often times more hostile than the Jewish reactions to the aggression:

- "As in Haifa, the irregulars intimidated the local population, echoing the experience of 1936-1939. 'Most of the people who stayed with their commander, 'Adel Nijam ad Din, behaved toward the inhabitants like conquerors. They confiscated their weapons and sold them, imposed fines and stole, and confiscated cars and sold them ... The inhabitants were more afraid of their defenders-saviours than of the Jews their enemies', wrote Nimr al Khatib."¹⁵
- "Arabs were also leaving out of fear that the Arab armies would take the city and punish them for treason."⁵⁰⁰
- "The locals were also 'frightened of [the ALA] and do what they are told. The officers of the ALA treat the locals like dirt', reported one British officer."⁵⁰⁵
- "The hundreds of foreign irregulars (Syrians, Iraqis, Transjordanians) arriving in late March proved to be more of a liability than an asset, spreading mayhem and lawlessness throughout the town and abusing the people they were supposed to protect."⁵¹⁰

- "The bands [local Palestinian gangs] in fact often fought with tenacity and skill, but they rarely cooperated with one another and tended, by high-handed and often brutal behavior, to alienate the villages among whom they "swam," in Mao Tse-Tung's phrase."³²⁵
- "One Arab commentator later wrote that, as daily convoys of refugees were departing for Gaza, the ALA troops "acted as if the town was theirs, and began to rob people and loot their houses. People's lives became worthless and women's honor was defiled." Mayor Heikal fled on 4 May or just before, as did most of the other remaining notables."³⁵⁰
- "The inhabitants [of Nazareth] really were joyful that they were rid of the regime of tyranny and humiliation of the [ALA] Iraqi [troops] who used to hit, curse, shoot, and jail the quiet inhabitants without reason."³⁸⁰
- "... the mukhtar of Nin met a Shai representative and presented the position of his village and its neighbors: 'We will do all in our power to prevent the entry of the gangs [Arab irregular forces]. And if you [Jews] betray us and kill us, it is better for us to die at your hands than to be killed by the gangs. You at least will not abuse us.'³⁹⁰
- "'Iraqi military personnel in general keep their distance from civilians and treat them with suspicion. There are many, many suspected spies. They are placed in detention and scrupulously interrogated. Many are executed. Other suspects are under surveillance,' reported an informer after returning from a trip through territory under Iraqi control. One Palestinian, writing about this period, recalled: '[The Palestinians] became scapegoats. Others accused them of betraying their homeland, spying against the Arab armies, selling out Arab officers, leading them into ambushes; they are the ones who handed over their cities and villages.'³⁹⁵

Palestinian Arabs being abused at the hands of fellow Arabs was nothing new and probably expected. In the midst of the Arab revolt of 1936-39 as "the Arab campaign of murder and sabotage gathered strength ... any [Palestinian Arabs] who remained and attempted loyalty to Government or refused assistance to the rebels were subjected to intimidation, abduction, and murder ..."¹³⁰ Their previous treatment undoubtedly came to mind as foreign militias came pouring into Palestine to stir up a war with the Jews.

Dissolution and flight of the Arab leadership:

It is a highly convincing reason to leave town when you see your leadership and your neighbors who have the means to leave doing the same. The effects on the decision of the rest of the Palestinian Arabs to flee their homes at such a sight should not be underestimated. I would have serious doubts over the will of even the Jews to stay and endure the war had their leadership fled the scene. The Jews did not make the decision to run. Many Arabs did. This was a major factor in the outcome of the war in the Jews' favor. The following citations show that the flight by the leadership and the "more moneyed" Arabs of Palestine "began immediately after the General Assembly decision at the end of November 1947"⁶⁰

- A telephone conversation recorded by Haganah intelligence reveals a conversation between Dr. Husayn Khalidi (an Arab Higher Committee and Jerusalem NC member) and Abu Zaki: "Forty days after the declaration of a jihad, and I am shattered. Everyone has left me. Six [AHC members] are in Cairo, two are in Damascus-I won't be able to hold on much longer. . . . Jerusalem is lost. No one is left in Qatamon, Sheikh Jarrah has emptied, people are even leaving the Old City. Everyone who has a check or a little money - is off to Egypt, off to Lebanon, off to Damascus."⁵¹⁵
- "The first group of our fifth column consists of those who abandon their houses and businesses and go to live elsewhere. . . . At the first sign of trouble they take to their heels to escape sharing the burden of struggle."⁵²⁰
- "As *Sarih* of Jaffa excoriated Sheikh Munis and other Arab villages near Tel Aviv on March 30, 1948, for 'bringing down disgrace on us all' by 'abandoning their villages.'⁵²⁵
- "The High Commissioner [Cunningham] attributed the plummeting Arab morale to the flight of responsible leaders at all levels, military as well as civil, especially at the municipal rank: [T]he collapsing Arab morale in Palestine is in some measure due to the increasing tendency of those who should be leading them to leave the country. For instance in Jaffa the Mayor went on 4 days leave 12 days ago and has not returned, and half the National Committee has left. In Haifa the Arab members of the municipality left some time ago; the two leaders of the Arab Liberation Army left actually during the recent battle. Now the Chief Arab

Magistrate has left. In all parts of the country the effendi class has been evacuating in large numbers over a considerable period and the tempo is increasing."⁵³⁰

- "The Arab civilians panicked and fled ignominiously. Villages were frequently abandoned before they were threatened by the progress of war. - General Glubb Pasha, in the London Daily Mail on August 12, 1948"⁵³⁵
- "By the of March 1948, some 100,000 Arabs, mostly from the urban upper and middle classes of Jaffa, Haifa and Jerusalem, and from villages in Jewish-dominated areas such as the Jordan Valley and the Coastal Plain, had fled to Arab centres to the east, including Nazareth, Nablus, and Bethlehem, or out of the country altogether. Wealthy urban Arab families began to get the jitters already during the countdown to the partition resolution. Some families, it was reported, wished to leave Nazareth already in the first week of November 1947. The actual flight began on the first day of hostilities."⁵⁴⁰
- "More important, the pre-April 1948 exodus encompassed mostly the middle and upper classes ... It was their [Haifa's NC members] relatives and friends, first and foremost, who were fleeing. ... most of the NC itself had left. By 28 March ... 11 of the 15 members had departed; efforts by chairman Ibrahim to lure them back had failed."⁵⁴⁵
- "Most of the important families had left [Jaffa] - the Abu Khidras for Gaza, the Nabulsis and Dajanis for Egypt, the 'Abd al Wahims for Beirut, the Baidases for Nablus. Without doubt, the flight of the middle and upper classes served to further demoralize the remaining masses."⁵⁵⁰
- "The flight of the middle and upper classes from these towns [Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem] ... severely undermined morale ..."⁵⁵⁵
- "The mass exodus of 21 April - early May must be seen against the backdrop of the gradual evacuation of the city [Haifa] by some 20,000-30,000 of its inhabitants, including most of the middle and upper classes ... most NC members and municipal councilors, and their families ..."⁵⁶⁰
- "The hurried departure [from Haifa] of Ahmad Bey Khalil, [the city's] Chief Magistrate and only remaining AHC representative ... is a very significant illustration of the opinion of the local Arabs as to the outcome of any extensive Jewish operations at present, stated British intelligence. ... Khalil's flight ... was not merely illustrative of low morale. ... it was one of its main causes. Khalil was followed ... by Amin Bey 'Izz a Din, the town militia OC. Yunis Nafa'a, his deputy ... fled the city ... The British view was succinctly expressed ... 'The desertion of their leaders and the sight of so much cowardice in high places completely unnerved the [Arab] inhabitants [of Haifa].' American diplomats sent Washington similar reports: 'The Arab Higher Command all [reportedly] left Haifa some hours before the battle took place.'⁵⁶⁵
- "As early as the Fall of 1947 ... many of the well-to-do Arabs ... closed down their houses and went to Beirut or Damascus. ... Current estimates by objective observers ... is that about 70,000 fled. These refugees caused a sudden absence of political and social leadership ... and thus as the hostilities developed ... many of the Arab peasantry ... fled as well, following their leaders' example. ... Their leadership had fled, which led them to assume that things must be pretty bad, so they figured they had better leave too. ... There are no solid numbers for this exodus, but estimates range around 100,000 people. ... No one, neither Israel nor Arab states, were encouraging, frightening, or ordering them to do so. The war had not yet even begun."⁵⁷⁰
- "The so-called 'middle class refugees' from the towns and cities constituted the first wave of the refugee exodus, and fled as the fighting between Zionist military organizations and local Palestinians began to escalate shortly after the United Nations partition decision of November 29, 1947. More well-to-do Palestinians in towns either harboring mixed Jewish-Arab populations or that were immediately adjacent to Jewish communities began leaving their homes and property for the safety of surrounding Arab cities like Cairo and Beirut as early as December 1947."⁵⁷⁵
- "The fact that almost all AHC and NC members were either out of the country before the outbreak of hostilities or fled Palestine with their families in the first months of the war undermined the remaining officials' ability to curb the exodus."³³⁰

Fear of Retribution:

It is apparent that a motivation for usually the Muslim Arab refugees to flee their homes was an expectation that revenge would be exacted upon them for previous treatment of the Jews; the Jews who now had the upper hand in the military conflict.

Yaacov Lozowick who belonged to the self-critical Israeli *Peace Now* organization points out the "... relationship between the harshness of the Jews and the resistance of the locals or their previous behavior. Druze villagers were usually left intact. Christian Arabs were often also not expelled, nor did they flee before the approaching Israeli forces. Muslims, especially those who had reason to fear retaliation for past behavior, either fled in advance or were expelled."⁵⁵

- "Either with the approach of the IDF columns or after the preliminary artillery barrage or during the skirmish on the outskirts, most Muslim villagers fled ... Where there were substantial Christian communities, the IDF expected and encountered less resistance and, consequently, used less artillery fire - and the inhabitants by and large stayed put. The inhabitants of several largely Muslim villages ... who stayed and offered no resistance were not molested when the IDF moved in."⁵⁸⁰
- "A few of the inhabitants had participated in the Yehiam Convoy battle and massacre ... Certainly the inhabitants feared retribution, which contributed to their panicky departure."⁵⁸⁵
- "... the demographic outcome generally corresponded to the circumstances of the military advance. Roughly, villages which had put up a stiff fight against IDF units were depopulated: Their inhabitants, fearing retribution, or declining to live under Jewish rule, fled or, in some cases, were expelled. The inhabitants of villages that surrendered quietly generally stayed put and usually were not harmed or expelled by the IDF. They did not fear (or little feared) retribution."⁵⁹⁰
- "Druze and Christian villages by and large offered no or less resistance and had no, or less of a, history of anti-Zionist militancy and, hence, expected, and received, 'better' treatment. Muslim villages often had a history of pro-Husseini activism and, in 1948, often resisted and expected, and received, worse treatment. In mixed villages, such as Tarshiha and Jish, Christians remained while Muslims fled. Often, non-resisting Muslims stayed put and were left in peace (as happened, for example, in 'Arraba and Deir Hanna)."⁵⁹⁵

Arab appeals for local Palestinian Arabs to flee:

Just as vociferously as Israel's critics promote ethnic cleansing via expulsions as the only significant cause of the Palestinian refugees, they also reject the fact Palestinians were instructed to leave their homes by Arab civilian and military leadership. The very idea that such a thing could have happened is typically laughed off as a tired, Zionist myth, despite the onslaught of evidence that it did in fact happen.

In my correspondence with Professor [Efraim Karsh](#), he advised "rather than look[ing] for the single 'blanket order,' one has to assemble the countless pieces of evidence into a complex mosaic on the basis of archival searches. The overall picture that will emerge will clearly show that a substantial number of Palestinian Arabs were driven out by their own brothers."¹⁰⁰ Here is the mosaic I have assembled so far:

- "Since 1948 it is we who demanded the return of refugees... while it is we who made them to leave... We brought disaster upon... Arab refugees, by inviting them and bringing pressure to bear upon them to leave... We have rendered them dispossessed... We have accustomed them to begging... We have participated in lowering their moral and social level... Then we exploited them in executing crimes of murder, arson, and throwing bombs upon... men, women and children - all this in service of political purposes..." - Haled al Azm, the Syrian Prime Minister in 1948-49, *The Memoirs of Haled al Azm*, (Beirut, 1973)
- "Who brought the Palestinians to Lebanon as refugees, suffering now from the malign attitude of newspapers and communal leaders, who have neither honor nor conscience? Who brought them over in dire straits and penniless, after they lost their honor? The Arab states, and Lebanon amongst them, did it." - *The Beirut Muslim weekly Kul-Shay*, Aug. 19, 1951.
- "To the [Arab] Kings and Presidents: Poverty is killing us... yet you are still searching for the way to provide aid... like the armies of your predecessors in the year of 1948, who forced us to leave [Israel], on the pretext of clearing the battlefields of civilians..." [Fuad Abu Higla, columnist official PA daily *Al Hayat Al Jadida*, *Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah*, March 19, 2001]
- "The 15th May, 1948, arrived ... On that day the mufti of Jerusalem appealed to the Arabs of Palestine to leave the country, because the Arab armies were about to enter and fight in

their stead." - The Cairo daily Akhbar el Yom, Oct. 12, 1963.

- "...the Jewish Haganah asked (using loudspeakers) Arabs to remain at their homes but the most of the Arab population followed their leaders who asked them to leave the country." The TIMES of London, reporting events of April 22nd, 1948
- "The representatives of the refugees denied that the propaganda of the Arab States and of the Arab Higher Committee had had any influence on their decision to flee their homes." - General Progress Report and Supplementary Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, Official Records: Fifth Session Supplement No. 18 (A/1367/Rev.1)
- "We will smash the country with our guns and obliterate every place the Jews seek shelter in. The Arabs should conduct their wives and children to safe areas until the fighting has died down." - Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said, quoted in Sir Am Nakbah ("The Secret Behind the Disaster") by Nimr el Hawari, Nazareth, 1952
- "The removal of the Arab inhabitants...was voluntary and was carried out at our request...The Arab delegation proudly asked for the evacuation of the Arabs and their removal to neighboring Arab countries. We are very glad to state that the Arabs guarded their honour and traditions with pride and greatness." - (cited by J.B. Schechtman, "The Arab Refugee Problem" - (NY Philosophical Library, 1952) - Also see Al-Zaman, Baghdad Journal, April 17, 1950 - and Peter Dodd and Halim Barakat, "River Without Bridges: A Study of the Exodus of the 1967 Arab Palestinian Refugees, also for reference to those who left in '48" per "Arab Palestinian Refugees" (Beirut Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969)
- "The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny but, instead, they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe, as if we were condemned to change places with them; they moved out of their ghettos and we occupied similar ones. The Arab States succeeded in scattering the Palestinian people and in destroying their unity. They did not recognize them as a unified people until the States of the world did so, and this is regrettable". - by Abu Mazen, from the article titled: "What We Have Learned and What We Should Do", published in Falastin el Thawra, the official journal of the PLO, of Beirut, in March 1976
- "Long before the end of the British mandate, between January and April, '48, practically all my Arab Palestinian staff of some 200 men and women and all of the 1800 labor force had left Haifa in spite of every possible effort to assure them of their safety if they stayed. They all left for one or more of the following reasons:
 1. The Arab terrorism engendered by the November, 1947, U.N. partition resolution frightened them to death of their imaginative souls and they feared Jewish retaliation.
 2. Propagandists promised a blood bath as soon as the mandate ended in which the streets of all the cities would run with blood.
 3. The promised invasion by the foreign Arab armies (which started on May 14, 1948, with the Arab Legion massacre of some 200 Jewish settlers at Kfar Etzion) was preceded by extensive broadcasts from Cairo, Damascus, Amman, and Beirut to the effect that any Arabs who stayed would be hanged as collaborators with the Jews."²⁶⁰
- Arab armies "forced them [the Palestinians] to emigrate and leave their homeland and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live." Abu Mazen, Wall Street Journal, June 5, 2003.
- "The refugees were confident that their absence would not last long, and that they would return within a week or two. Their leaders had promised them that the Arab armies would crush the 'Zionist gangs' very quickly and that there was no need for panic or fear of a long exile." - Monsignor George Hakim, Greek Catholic Bishop of Galilee, in the Beirut newspaper Sada al Janub, August 16, 1948
- "It must not be forgotten that the Arab Higher Committee encouraged the refugees' flight from their homes in Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem." - Near East Arabic Broadcasting Station, Cyprus, April 3, 1949
- This wholesale exodus was due partly to the belief of the Arabs, encouraged by the boasting of an unrealistic Arab press and the irresponsible utterances of some of the Arab leaders that it could be only a matter of some weeks before the Jews were defeated by the armies of the Arab States and the Palestinian Arabs enabled to re-enter and retake possession of their country. But it was also, and in many parts of the country, largely due to a policy of deliberate terrorism and eviction followed by the Jewish commanders in the areas they occupied, and reaching its peak of brutality in the massacre of Deir Yassin. - Edward Atiyah (then Secretary of the Arab League Office in London) in The Arabs (London, 1955), p. 183

- "The Arab states which had encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies, have failed to keep their promise to help these refugees." -- The Jordanian daily newspaper Falastin, February 19, 1949.
- The Secretary General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, assured the Arab peoples that the occupation of Palestine and of Tel Aviv would be as simple as a military promenade. . . . He pointed out that they were already on the frontiers and that all the millions the Jews had spent on land and economic development would be easy booty, for it would be a simple matter to throw Jews into the Mediterranean. . . . Brotherly advice was given to the Arabs of Palestine to leave their land, homes, and property and to stay temporarily in neighboring fraternal states, lest the guns of the invading Arab armies mow them down. - Habib Issa, Secretary General of the Arab League (Azzam Pasha's successor), in the newspaper Al Hoda, June 8, 1951
- Some of the Arab leaders and their ministers in Arab capitals . . . declared that they welcomed the immigration of Palestinian Arabs into the Arab countries until they saved Palestine. Many of the Palestinian Arabs were misled by their declarations.... It was natural for those Palestinian Arabs who felt impelled to leave their country to take refuge in Arab lands . . . and to stay in such adjacent places in order to maintain contact with their country so that to return to it would be easy when, according to the promises of many of those responsible in the Arab countries (promises which were given wastefully), the time was ripe. Many were of the opinion that such an opportunity would come in the hours between sunset and sunrise. - Arab Higher Committee, in a memorandum to the Arab League, Cairo, 1952, quoted in The Refugee in the World, by Joseph B. Schechtman, 1963
- "The Arab governments told us: Get out so that we can get in. So we got out, but they did not get in." - A refugee quoted in Al Difaa (Jordan) September 6, 1954
- The mass evacuation, prompted partly by fear, partly by order of Arab leaders, left the Arab quarter of Haifa a ghost city. More than pride and defiance was behind the Arab orders. By withdrawing Arab workers their leaders hoped to paralyze Haifa. Jewish leaders said wishfully: 'They'll be back in a few days. Already some are returning.' - TIME, May 3, 1948 (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,798519-1,00.html>)
- "As early as the first months of 1948 the Arab League issued orders exhorting the people to seek a temporary refuge in neighboring countries, later to return to their abodes in the wake of the victorious Arab armies and obtain their share of abandoned Jewish property." - Bulletin of The Research Group for European Migration Problems, 1957
- "Of the 62,000 Arabs who formerly lived in Haifa not more than 5,000 or 6,000 remained. Various factors influenced their decision to seek safety in flight. There is but little doubt that the most potent of the factors were the announcements made over the air by the -Higher Arab Executive, urging the Arabs to quit.. . . It was clearly intimated that those Arabs who remained in Haifa and accepted Jewish protection would be regarded as renegades." - The London weekly Economist, October 2, 1948
- "Israelis argue that the Arab states encouraged the Palestinians to flee. And, in fact, Arabs still living in Israel recall being urged to evacuate Haifa by Arab military commanders who wanted to bomb the city." - Newsweek, January 20, 1963
- "It was only on 12 October 1947 that the first real attempt to organize locally for the looming struggle was made, when some 150 members of Muslim and Christian societies, gathered 'to draw up plans and to counsel together on the present serious situation', reached agreement on several general principles including 'the evacuation of women and children to neighbouring Arab countries'." - Karsh, Efraim - Nakbat Haifa, Pg. 30
- "'At the sound of the first shot these cowards, like fleeing mice, packed up their luggage, took their cheque books and fled the country, leaving it to us to defend the homeland and their homes', lamented the committee's press liaison officer, Salah al-Abasi. 'They hope to return when the situation calms down... but they will find the country's gates shut', he warned emphatically, calling on the neighbouring Arab states to expel the Palestinian escapees from their territories." - Karsh, Efraim - Nakbat Haifa, Pg. 33
- "'You have made a foolish decision', he [Major-General Hugh Stockwell, Commander of the British Sixth Airborne Division] thundered at the Arabs: Think it over, as you'll regret it afterwards. You must accept the conditions of the Jews. They are fair enough. Don't permit life to be destroyed senselessly. After all, it was you who began the fighting, and the Jews have won. But the Arabs were unmoved. 'They had lost [the] first round but ... there were more to come'. All they wanted, therefore, was British support in carrying out the mass

evacuation. They stuck to this position the next morning, when they met Stockwell and his advisers to discuss the practicalities of the evacuation. Of the 30,000-plus Arabs still in Haifa, only a handful, they said, wished to stay.” – Karsh, Efraim – Nakbat Haifa, Pp. 50-51

- “As reported by the United Press (UP) correspondent in Haifa, Mano Dierkson: ... The Arab leaders ordered the town’s [Haifa] complete evacuation whereas the Jewish leaders felt that such a development would be a tremendous defeat for them ... Should the situation remain calm, there is little doubt that many Arabs will stay despite the evacuation order by the Arab leadership, and one can hear many Arabs expressing their decision to stay. Jewish leaders walked around the Arab quarters today, talking to the Arab leaders who were busy urging their congregation to leave. It would seem today that the Arabs may well lose the political campaign just as they had lost the military campaign last Wednesday. ... as the Jews were attempting to keep the Arabs in Haifa, the Arab Emergency Committee was doing its best to get them out. Scaremongering was a primary weapon in its arsenal. Arab residents received written threats that, unless they left the town, they would be branded as traitors, deserving death. Similarly, shortly after announcing their intention to remain in their working place, the Christian employees of the British army’s northern headquarters began leaving en masse. ... they said that they had been threatened with severe punishment if they did not leave. Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Murad of the National Committee ... proved a particularly effective practitioner of scaremongering. On 23 April he cowered a large group of escapees from Wadi Nisnas, who were about to return to their homes, into leaving the town. Were they to remain in Haifa, he warned, they would all be killed as the Jews spared not even women and children. On the other hand, the Arab Legion had 200 trucks ready to transfer the Haifa refugees to a safe haven outside the town, where they would be given free accommodation, clothes and food. The importance of these actions cannot be overstated.” – Karsh, Efraim – Nakbat Haifa, Pp. 54-55
- “Already on 25 April the American consulate in Haifa was reporting that the ‘local Mufti dominated Arab leaders urge all Arabs [to] leave [the] city and large numbers [are] going’. Three days later it pointed a clear finger as to who ordered this evacuation: ‘Reportedly Arab Higher Committee ordering all Arabs [to] leave’.” – Karsh, Efraim – Nakbat Haifa, Pg. 57
- According to a detailed British intelligence report ... ‘there was no lack of response to the appeal of [the] National Committee members, and the evacuation has continued daily ...’. The report did not hide its view that had it not been for the incitement and scaremongering of the Haifa Arab leadership, most Arab residents might well have stayed: after the Jews had gained control of the town, and in spite of a subsequent food shortage, many would not have responded to the call for a complete evacuation but for the rumours and propaganda spread by the National Committee members remaining in the town. Most widespread was a rumour that Arabs remaining in Haifa would be taken as hostages by [the] Jews in the event of future attacks on other Jewish areas: and an effective piece of propaganda with its implied threat of retribution when the Arabs recapture the town, is that [those] people remaining in Haifa acknowledged tacitly that they believe in the principle of a Jewish State. It is alleged that Victor Khayyat is responsible for these reports. And a Hagana report succinctly summed up the factors underlying the mass evacuation of Haifa:
 - 1...the present Arab leadership of Haifa discusses with our people the restoration of normalcy, but their actual policy aims at the maximum action by way of accelerating the evacuation of the Haifa Arabs. From both their deeds and words it seems that they are doing whatever they can to accelerate the evacuation (whispering propaganda, organization of convoys, obstruction of efforts to resolve problems of existence).
 - 2.High Arab echelons tell us that they have received specific instructions to vacate Haifa of Arabs. ...
 - 3.There are some 5,000-10,000 Arabs in Haifa today ... fully packed and ready to move. The uncertainty about future developments helps in this respect to the present leaders’ agitation for departure from the town.
 - 4.Whenever an Arab seeks the opinion of the present leadership whether or not to stay here, the advice given is invariably ‘We cannot promise anything, you had better leave’.
 - 5.The masses explain the evacuation order in Haifa by the gearing of Transjordan’s armed forces for a wholesale massacre (artillery, aircraft, etc.).” – Karsh, Efraim – Nakbat Haifa, Pp. 57-58
- In an interview with the London Telegraph in August 1948, the Palestinian leader Emile Ghoury blamed not Israel but the Arab states for the creation of the refugee problem; so did the organizers of protest demonstrations that took place in many West Bank towns on the first anniversary of Israel’s establishment. During a fact-finding mission to Gaza in June 1949, Sir John Troutbeck, head of the British Middle East office in Cairo and no friend to Israel or the Jews, was surprised to discover that while the refugees “express no bitterness against the Jews (or for that matter against the Americans or ourselves) they speak with the utmost bitterness of the Egyptians and other Arab states. “We know who our enemies are,” they will say, and they are referring to their Arab brothers who, they declare, persuaded them unnecessarily to leave their home. . . . I even heard it said that many of the refugees would give a welcome to the Israelis if they were to come in and take the district over.” Cited in article by Efraim Karsh (<http://www.aijac.org.au/review/2001/266/essay266.html>)
- An appeal has been made to the Arabs by the Jews to reopen their shops and businesses in order to relieve the difficulties of feeding the Arab population. Evacuation was still going on yesterday and several trips were made by ‘Z’ craft to Acre. Roads too, were crowded with people leaving Haifa with all their belongings. At a meeting yesterday afternoon Arab leaders

reiterated their determination to evacuate the entire Arab population and they have been given the loan of ten 3-ton military trucks as from this morning to assist the evacuation.²⁵⁵

- "It is not only that the Arabs left upon the advice of their leaders, but the Jewish position, as reflected in the northern port-town of Haifa, called upon the Arabs to remain in their towns. In fact, a large scale Jewish propaganda campaign to convince the Arabs to return, or those remaining not to leave was considered."³¹⁰
- "According to the US Consul in Haifa, '... local mufti-dominated Arab leaders' were urging 'all Arabs to leave the city, and large numbers did so.'" (http://unmia.com/archives/95 citing Aubrey Lippincott, U.S. Consul General in Haifa, April 22, 1948)
- "In another secret decision, the committee instructed the League's members 'to open the gates ... to receive children, women and old people [from Palestine] and to support them in the event of disturbances breaking out in Palestine and compelling some of its Arab population to leave the country.' This provision was to prove crucial in facilitating the mass exodus that resulted in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. ... The Political Committee's decisions were then endorsed by the Arab heads of state, meeting as the League Council, at Aley, in Lebanon, in the second week of October. (The idea of a mass evacuation from Palestine may already have been doing the rounds among Arab decision-makers more than a year before. 'Azzam reportedly [or mis-reportedly] declared in May 1946 that 'Arab circles proposed to evacuate all Arab women and children from Palestine and send them to neighbouring countries, to declare "Jehad" and to consider Palestine a war zone.')³¹⁵
- "... the AHC, local NCs, and various militia officers often instructed villages and urban neighborhoods near major Jewish concentrations of population to send away women, children, and the old to safer areas. This conformed with Arab League secretary general 'Azzam's reported thinking already in May 1946 ... and the Arab League Political Committee resolution, in Sofar in September 1947, that the Arab states open their doors to absorb babies, women and old people from among Palestine's Arabs and care for them - if events in Palestine necessitate this. Almost from the start of hostilities frontline Arab communities began to send away their dependents. For example, already on 3-4 December 1947 the inhabitants of Lifta, a village on the western edge of Jerusalem, were ordered to send away their women and children (partly in order to make room for incoming militiamen). Dozens of villages in the Coastal Plain and Jezreel and Jordan Valleys followed suit in the following months. The cities, too, were affected. In early February, the AHC ordered the removal of women and children from Haifa, and by 28 March about 150 children had been evacuated, at least fifty to a monastery in Lebanon. On 4-5 April 1948, a fifteen-vehicle convoy left Haifa for Beirut; on board were children and youths from the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood."³³⁵
- "During late April and early May, a handful of villages along the Syrian border were ordered, by the Syrian authorities or local Arab commanders, to evacuate their houses or to move out their women and children, either to facilitate their takeover by Arab militiamen or to clear the area in advance of the impending invasion."³⁶⁰
- "It is not my intent to discuss who belongs in that tiny region called Israel, but I will risk being shunned by my own community to set the record straight. The question is: why did Arabs flee the area that became Israel? After all, the ones who remained in their homes still live there today and prosper. The fact is that the Arab world warned the Palestinians against staying with the Jews. They also warned them that Arabs were going in to fight the Zionists and that the Palestinians should leave to avoid getting hurt. Many Palestinians trusted these Arab leaders and left as instructed. Those who had lived with Jews for a long time were not as easily convinced of the danger, and these Arabs stayed home. Among them was my family, which saw cars traveling the area. The cars contained Jews. They reassured Arabs that they would not be harmed. Thus, we had a situation where Jews begged Arabs to stay and live with them, while Arabs from foreign countries told them to leave right away."⁴¹⁰
- Judith Apter Klinghoffer finds five Palestinian admissions that they were instructed to flee their land from Arab leadership in her article [Palestinians Admit they Left Israel to Aid its Destruction](#):
 - "... the 'Arab Salvation Army' came and told the Palestinians: 'We have come to you in order to liquidate the Zionists and their state. Leave your houses and villages, you will return to them in a few days safely. Leave them so we can fulfill our mission (destroy Israel) in the best way and so you won't be hurt.'" - Citing Jawad al Bashiti, Palestinian journalist in Jordan, writing in Al-Ayyam, May 13, 2008
 - "... The leaders and the elites promised us at the beginning of the 'Catastrophe' in 1948, that the duration of the exile will not be long, and that it will not last more than a few days or months, and afterwards the refugees will return to their homes ..." - Citing Mahmoud al-Habbash, Palestinian journalist in PA official daily, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, December 13, 2006

- "They told us: The Jews attacked our region and it is better to evacuate the village and return, after the battle is over. And indeed there were among us [who fled Israel] ... based on the assumption that we would return after a few hours." - Citing Asmaa Jabir Balasimah, Women who fled Israel in 1948, Al-Ayyam, May 16, 2006
- An Arab viewer calling Palestinian Authority TV quoted his father, "Mr. Ibrahim [Sarsur]. I address you as a Muslim. My father and grandfather told me that during the 'Catastrophe' [in 1948], our district officer issued an order that whoever stays in Palestine and in Majdel [near Ashkelon - Southern Israel] is a traitor, he is a traitor." - Citing PA TV, 1999
- "I have received a letter from a prisoner in Acre prison, to the Arab summit: To the [Arab and Muslim] Kings and Presidents ... poverty is killing us, the symptoms are exhausting us ... yet you are still searching for the way to provide aid, like one who is looking for a needle in a haystack or like the armies of your predecessors in the year of 1948, who forced us to leave [Israel], on the pretext of clearing the battlefields of civilians ... So what will your summit do now?" - Citing Fuad Abu Higla, senior Palestinian, Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, March 19, 2001

Benny Morris' accounts of Arab appeals to flee (from "*Birth Revisited*"):

- "On 12 December the committee warned against 'Fifth Columnists' spreading defeatism and influencing people 'to leave their properties and houses, which have become easy prey to the enemy who has seized and occupied them ... Stay in your places', the committee urged." Pg. 108. Obviously encouragement to flee was being given for there to be a warning not to listen to it.
- "The exodus of the Arabs from western Jerusalem ... begun on 30 November ... the departees explained their evacuation as 'preparatory to [military] operations on the part of the Arabs' ... A week before, the Arab inhabitants of a house in Ethiopia Street in downtown (west) Jerusalem had 'received instructions' - apparently from Arab authorities - to evacuate and move to an Arab area; hostilities were imminent." Pg. 119
- "... some Arab families evacuated Lifta ... Lifta was apparently told by Arab authorities to evacuate its women and children and to prepare to house a militia company." Pg. 119
- "Arab families were reported evacuating the Qatamon and Mekor Hayim neighbourhoods. The Mekor Hayim evacuees told Jewish interlocutors that they had been 'ordered' to do so, presumably by Arab authorities." Pg. 119
- "During December - February, many Arab residents in or near the largely Jewish neighbourhoods of Talpiyot and Mekor Haim, in southern Jerusalem, and the adjacent suburb village of Beit Safafa, abandoned their homes, either as a result of Arab orders - to get them out of harm's way or to free their home for incoming militiamen - or because of Jewish attack or fear of attack." Pp. 122-123
- "In general, the emigration was confined to areas adjacent to the main concentrations of Jewish population and was due to Haganah (and, in small measure, IZL and LHI) retaliatory attacks and fear of such attacks, and to the orders of Arab authorities to evacuate whole villages or women, children, and the old. Pg. 125
- "Women and children were also evacuated ... from Khirbet Beit Lid, Salama, ... and Khirbet 'Azzun ... (the latter on orders from Nablus) ... On the day when there will be a general [Arab] assault on the Jewish settlements, the whole population of the village will first be evacuated. Meanwhile, they must provide intelligence ... To the north, the men of Khirbet as Sarkas ... were repeatedly ordered by the AHC to move out their women and children - but they refused. ... the Bedouin tribe of 'Arab al Balawina ... had been ordered ... by the authorities in Tulkarm to prepare to decamp. The first village to be fully evacuated in the Tel Aviv area was Summeil ..." Pg. 126
- "In mid-February, the semi-sedentary Arabs of Wadi Hawarith, south of Hadera, were instructed by Madlul Bek, of the ALA, to evacuate their 'women and property to the Arab area'." Pg. 129
- "But some evacuations were precipitated by Arab orders or advice. In late December 1947, the Arab guards in Jewish groves ... were ordered by the regional NCs ... to move out along with their families ... Jaramla was partially evacuated ... 'on the order of the [Arab] gangs' ... The inhabitants of Bureika ... were apparently ordered ... by the AHC to evacuate so that the village might serve as a base for attack by irregulars on the Haifa-Tel Aviv road." Pg. 130

- “But just as often, NCs or ALA commanders ordered villagers to evacuate villages for this or that reason. Usually ... the militiamen wanted the villagers to evacuate so that their houses would be available to irregulars for bivouac or as positions. At other times, the evacuation was prompted by an unwillingness to leave communities under Jewish control, as with the order in December 1947 by the Tulkarm NC to the ‘Arab al Balawina to ‘be ready to leave their place at any moment’ and ... to the ‘Arab al Fuqqara ‘to leave’ ... and, more generally, to ‘all the Arabs in the area ... to leave their places, and it is being carried out’. A similar order was issued by the Gaza NC to the Wahidat Bedouin.” Pg. 136
- “Husseini at times explicitly permitted and even encouraged the evacuation of women, children and old people from combat zones or prospective combat zones in order to reduce civilian casualties – in line with pre-war Arab League directives.” Pg. 136
- “Only an extremely small, almost insignificant number of the refugees during this early period left because of Haganah or IZL or LHI expulsion orders or forceful ‘advice’ to that effect. Many more – especially women, children and old people – left as a result of orders or advice from Arab military commanders and officials.” Pg. 139
- “... the AHC and some NCs stepped up their pressure on villages in various areas ... to send away women, children and the old to safety ... in several areas, Arab military or political leaders ordered the complete evacuation of villages.” Pg. 174
- “But if the weight of the evidence suggests that the initial order to evacuate had come from the local leadership ... the AHC and its local supporters endorsed it ex post facto ... egging on the continuing evacuation. ... Lippincott, reported: ‘Local Mufti dominated Arab leaders urge all Arabs leave city’ ... and added ... ‘Reportedly AHC ordering all Arabs to leave’. British observers concurred. Cunningham ... reported to Creech-Jones: ‘British authorities at Haifa have formed the impression that total evacuation is being urged on the Haifa Arabs from higher Arab quarters and that the townsfolk themselves are against it.’ The Sixth Airborne Division was more explicit: Probable reason for Arab Higher Executive [i.e., AHC] ordering Arabs to evacuate Haifa is to avoid possibility of Haifa Arabs being used as hostages in future operations after May 15. Arabs have also threatened to bomb Haifa from the air. British military headquarters Middle East similarly referred to ‘the evacuation of Haifa by the AHC ... who ... have encouraged the population to evacuate ... greatly embarrass[ing] the Jews’. Most of the remaining Arab leaders also encouraged the remaining townspeople to leave ... most members of the Emergency Committee were busy both encouraging departure and organizing the convoys out. ... ‘The Arabs in Haifa relate that they have received an order from the AHC to leave Haifa as soon as possible ...’ Pp. 198-199
- “... Arab commanders ordered women and children to evacuate al Dawwara and al ‘Abisiyya ... and there was a general evacuation by Maghrebi villagers and Bedouin tribesmen in the area west and south of Lake Hula. Among those who reportedly left were ‘Arab al Zubeid and most of the inhabitants of ‘Ulmaniya, Husseiniya, Kirad al Baqqara and Kirad al Ghannama, and Khisas.” Pg. 249
- “The Syrian authorities or local commanders that day and the next ordered the villages around Rosh Pina to send away their women and children. The inhabitants of the Shi’ite village of Hunin ... were ordered to evacuate within six days – apparently by Arab, perhaps Lebanese, authorities.” Pg. 249
- “One Palmah commander, perhaps Allon, later summarized what had occurred: The only joint operation between the Jews and the Arabs was the evacuation by the Arabs of the Hula area. Orders from abroad [i.e. apparently Syria] for the evacuation of the whole area by the Arabs were buttressed by a whispering campaign by our intelligence services.” Pg. 251
- “But before the Haganah could respond, the authorities in Ramle, perhaps sensing that treachery was afoot, ordered the villagers to evacuate. By 9 May, ‘Arab al Satarriya (along with the nearby village of Bir Salim) evacuated.” Pg. 255
- “But the civilians were already under pressure, by Qawuqji ... at least to partially evacuate their homes. Already on 24 June, soldiers garrisoning Ma’lul and Mujeidil instructed the villagers ‘to evacuate all their women and children [with] all their property’. The Bedouin tribes ‘Arab Muzeirib and ‘Arab Jamuis were similarly instructed.” Pg. 415
- “The Egyptians had apparently ordered or strongly advised the inhabitants to leave but several hundred had opted to stay.” Pg. 471
- “In some areas, retreating Egyptian units urged communities to retreat with them.” Pg. 491

Norman Finkelstein writing in *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*⁶⁰⁰ manages to shoot his own toes by repeatedly calling the claim that Palestinian Arabs were encouraged or ordered to flee Palestine "Israeli propaganda" (pg. 56), a "standard Zionist claim" (pg. 58), and as being among "standard Israeli claims" (pg. 87). Edward Atiyah, author of *The Arabs*⁶⁰⁵ whose statement I cite in the evidence above also refers to this claim as a "Zionist allegation"³⁵. But out of the dozens of unique sources I have listed above, only a minority can be considered "Zionist". How then does he (or anyone else) explain the intent of these sources if there were no Arab demands that Palestinians flee? What leads the many Arab sources to tow the "Zionist" line and propagate "Israeli propaganda" on behalf of the Jewish state that their own countries just got done trying to destroy?

Finkelstein focuses only on radio as the broadcast medium when confidently asserting no such orders were given to the Palestinians. Yet were there no other methods of communication besides the radio? It is not unrealistic to conclude that in a relatively backward region of the world populated mostly by poor people, radio was not the primary method of communication. Bernard Lewis points out that radio broadcasting was not used even in Egypt (much less Palestine) to communicate news on a large scale until 1952⁶⁴⁵. Newspapers, posters, leaflets, notices, and the word of mouth generated from such communications were much more common and effective in relaying information. For example,

- the posters the Histadrut put up for Arab workers encouraging them to live in peace with the Jews and ignore their leaders incitement to violence⁷⁰
- distributing leaflets in the Hefer Valley – Samaria foothills area⁷⁵
- the posters the Haganah used to communicate threats in Jaffa⁸⁰
- the leaflets the Haganah distributed to encourage the Arab residents of Haifa to return home⁸⁵
- the town criers that were used to communicate news of land sales¹⁷⁰
- the *fatwa* against selling land to Jews that was "read aloud in city and village mosques" or proclaimed in public assemblies throughout Palestine²⁹⁰
- the placards a rebel group called 'the Lightning' pasted on walls throughout Jerusalem communicating their nationalist objectives²⁹⁵
- the leaflets issued by rebel forces calling for village mukhtars to resign from civil administration jobs and anonymous placards pasted to government buildings in Nablus calling on civil servants to join the Arab strike³⁰⁰
- the placards posted on mosque doors in Haifa by nationalist forces warning against failure to support the rebels and threats on leaflets distributed to Beisan's inhabitants to supply men and money to rebels³⁰⁵

Alphonse de Lamartine, writing in the 1830s gives us a glimpse of how effective word of mouth communicated even trivial news: "It may be easily imagined with what rapidity the news flies from mouth to mouth throughout Arabia [referring to the Near East in general]. It is already known at Damascus, Aleppo, Latakin, Saida, and Jerusalem, that a stranger is arrived, and that he is about to traverse these regions"²³⁵ For even vital messages to be communicated in these ways illustrates how pervasive these methods were used in Palestine. Focusing only on radio misses all of this ... in Finkelstein's case, probably on purpose.

He then goes on to demonstrate "the absurdity of this pretense" by citing Simha Flapan: "From the point of view of military logistics, the contention that the Palestinian Arab leadership appealed to the Arab masses to leave their homes ... makes no sense at all. The Arab armies, coming long distances and operating in or from the Arab areas of Palestine, needed the help of the local population for food, fuel, water, transport, manpower, and information." (pg. 59).

But the Palestinian Arabs did not limit their violations of sound logistics only to the military realm. For example, selling vast swaths of land to Zionist settlers could be considered operating contrary to sound logistics if your goal was to prevent a Zionist foothold in Palestine, but it happened. Launching internal terror campaigns against rival Arab political groups that destroyed any sense of Palestinian unity could be considered operating contrary to sound logistics if your goal is building a state, but it happened. With such a background there is no justification whatsoever to doubt that Palestinian Arabs would operate contrary to military logistics as well. Nevermind the lackluster performance of every other Arab army invading Israel in 1948.

Finkelstein's argument, that because ideal logistics were violated, then the violation must not have happened, ironically contradicts one of his primary accusations against Israel in the 1948 war: Jewish ethnic cleansing of Arabs. One conclusion of Joseph Schechtman's exhaustive studies on population transfers and expulsions around the world is "if population transfer is deemed unavoidable, there must be no trace of the collective minority existence left, no stuff for the resurgence of the minority problem."²¹⁰ Following Finkelstein's logic, we conclude not that the Israelis executed a plan to expel Arabs, but that the mere existence of such a plan is absurd because Israel violated sound ethnic cleansing logistics by leaving a rather sizable minority existence. Unsurprisingly, Finkelstein only activates this argument when it proves detrimental to Israel and totally ignores how it works to contradict his own judgments made elsewhere.

In any event, Arab leaders ordering Palestinians to flee their homes has been on record from when Djemal Pasha ordered the evacuation of Jaffa during WWI in 1917²⁴⁰ to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's appeal in 2006: "I have a special message to the Arabs of Haifa, to your

martyrs and to your wounded. I call on you to leave this city. I hope you do this. ... Please leave so we don't shed your blood, which is our blood".⁵⁰

Exaggerations and rumors:

The detrimental effect that exaggerated and embellished rumors or reports had on the will of the Palestinian populace to remain cannot be understated. What villagers heard of previous battles, saturated with lies and exaggerations, was directly responsible for inducing such fear among the Palestinian Arabs that they often times were gone before the advancing Israelis ever showed up. Who can blame them? If the Israelis really were that drunk with brutality, leaving a trail of atrocities across Palestine, most would probably decide to not stick around to experience it. Unfortunately most if not all of the local Arabs hearing these reports were not given an accurate description of what really happened and therefore, were not given a real chance to make the decision to stay in their homes. It's impossible to come up with a figure for how many would have stayed had they not been forced out through Arab scare tactics, but undoubtedly many would have chose to stay put.

The motivation to spread such horrific rumors varied of course. Some of it was to entice the surrounding Arab nations to invade on behalf of the local Palestinian Arabs, to generate negative international opinions against the new Israeli state, to unite the divided Arab community together in a common cause of warring against the Jews, and to provoke violent reactions from otherwise passive Palestinian Arabs who just wanted to farm. Whatever the reasons, the tactic backfired and inspired more flight than anything else:

- "For the flight and fall of the other villages it is our leaders who are responsible because of their dissemination of rumors exaggerating Jewish crimes and describing them as atrocities in order to inflame the Arabs ... they instilled fear and terror in the hearts of the Arabs in Palestine, until they fled leaving their homes and properties to the enemy. - Yunes Ahmed Assad, Arab Refugee from Deir Yassin"⁶¹⁰
- "On 15 May, Faiz Idrisi, the AHC's 'inspector for public safety', issued orders to Palestinian militiamen to fight against 'the Fifth Column and the rumour-mongers, who are causing the flight of the Arab population'."⁶¹⁵
- The urgings were in the form of threats, warnings and horrific rumours. The cumulative effect of these rumours in inducing flight cannot be exaggerated. ... But for these 'rumours and propaganda spread by the National Committee members remaining in the town', many of the Arabs 'would not have evacuated Haifa.'⁶²⁰
- "The refugees were about to return home when Sheikh Murad and another Muslim figure appeared on the scene. Murad, according to HIS, told the refugees: The Arab Legion has volunteered to give 200 trucks to take the refugees to a safe place outside Haifa, where they will be housed and given food and clothes aplenty and all without payment, and he threatened that if they stayed in Haifa, the Jews would kill them and not spare their women and children."⁶²⁵
- "The thousands who had nonetheless fled the town immediately after conquest had done so ... because they had believed 'spurious and counterfeit Arab propaganda ... about atrocities by Jews who cut off hands with axes, break legs and rape women, etc.'."⁶³⁰
- "Beit 'Affa, 'Ibdis, Tall al Turmus and the village of 'Iraq Suwaydan all fell on 8-9 July, the villagers fleeing ... local rumour had it that the Israeli troops had dealt with the inhabitants ... 'as they had dealt with Deir Yassin'."⁶³⁵
- "Wailing refugees fled to Shafa-'Amr, spreading rumors of Jewish atrocities."³⁴⁵
- "Faiz Idrisi, the AHC's 'inspector for public safety,' ordered Palestinian militiamen to fight against 'the Fifth Column and the rumor-mongers, who are causing the flight of the Arab population.'"³⁵⁵

Arabs were using rumors and exaggerations against fellow Arabs to manipulate the social climate for decades. As far back as the 1920's the British administration of Palestine reported "The wildest stories as to the intentions of the Jews and the fate awaiting the Arabs were circulated in the towns and villages, and were often believed by a credulous people."²⁰⁵

Some Arabs wanted no part in a Jewish state:

Whether for reasons of pride, hatred, fear of the Jews, or fear of being branded a traitor for living among Jews, Arabs abandoned their homes even when the dangers of war were over.

- "The Arabs did not want to submit to a truce they rather preferred to abandon their homes, their belongings and everything they possessed in the world and leave the town. This is in fact what they did." - Jamal Husseini, Acting Chairman of the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, told to the United Nations Security Council, quoted in the UNSC Official Records (N. 62), April 23, 1948, p. 14
- "... Emile Ghoury, Secretary of the Arab Higher Command, called for the prevention of the refugees from 'return.' He stated in the Beirut Telegraph on August 6, 1948: 'it is inconceivable that the refugees should be sent back to their homes while they are occupied by the Jews ... It would serve as a first step toward Arab recognition of the state of Israel and Partition.'"
- "The inhabitants of the large village of Miska ... were allowed to stay [by the IDF]. But on the 19th, after sniping from the village and several Haganah dead, the headman of neighbouring Kibbutz Ramat Hakovesh ordered the inhabitants 'to depart within two hours'. The order was softened by members of the Committee for Arab Property, who proposed ... that the villagers hand over their arms, accept Jewish rule, and move inland ... inside the Jewish area. But they refused and opted for evacuation eastwards." (*Birth Revisited*, Pg. 246)
- "Roughly, villages which had put up a stiff fight against IDF units were depopulated: Their inhabitants ... declining to live under Jewish rule, fled or, in some cases, were expelled." (*Birth Revisited*, Pp. 474-475)
- The Peel Commission identified the Arabs' "hatred and fear of the establishment of the Jewish National Home" as one of the two main underlying causes of the riots beginning in 1936. This hatred and/or fear of a Jewish state played a role in a decision to leave it. (Palestine Royal Commission, Chapter IV.)
- "'Aqir's inhabitants promptly fled, perhaps fearing that, if they stayed, fellow Arabs would accuse them of treacherously accepting Jewish sovereignty.'" ³⁶⁵
- "Thus, on 13-14 May 'Ein-Gev, an isolated kibbutz on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, demanded that neighboring Arab Argibat (Nuqeib), whom the Jews had earlier persuaded to stay put, accept Jewish rule and hand over their weapons. But the villagers opted for evacuation, probably fearing Arab charges of treachery if they stayed.'" ³⁷⁰
- After the surrender of Nazareth, "The IDF troops behaved unobjectionably. 'Soon the [inhabitants] became aware that they were being well-treated and not being harmed,' reported the Intelligence Service. (Nonetheless, in the following weeks Muslim families steadily left the town, according to Israeli reports.)" ³⁸⁵

"The Arabs, including not only Palestinian Arabs, but those of the seven Arab States, find it extremely difficult to accept even the fact a Jewish State in Palestine. ²⁸⁰

Antipathy toward Arab citizenship in a Jewish state didn't end in 1948. The next refugee creating war Israel fought in 1967 serves as another example when "the Six Day War was over, without any pressures or promises from any side, when there was not even the hint or rumor of a threat to the safety of life or property, some 200,000 Arabs in Judea and Samaria packed their belongings and crossed the Jordan. Day after day the caravans of trucks and buses and private cars drove down to the approaches to the river. ... Three weeks after the war I was able to visit the area. I watched the progress of the evacuees to the bridge. I asked a well-dressed young man where he came from and why he was leaving. He explained that, as an employee of the Jordanian government stationed at Bethlehem, he had been instructed to report to Amman. Once across the river, the Arabs were interviewed by foreign newspapermen. There everyone who told his story claimed to have been driven out by the Jews." ¹⁴⁵

"A pregnant description of this phenomenon is contained in the London Times of June 7, 1948, in a dispatch from its correspondent in Amman. 'Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and even Iraq were filled with fugitives from Palestine, many of them young men of military age still carrying arms ... The cafes and hotel lobbies continued to be filled with young effendis whose idea was that though something must be done it should be done by somebody else. Some of them had spent a week or so at the front and on the strength of this they felt entitled to return to less dangerous climes.'

Were they all cowards? Were they all stupid? They were neither. They did not, indeed, think long; they decided quickly. It was not difficult to decide – because they did not see the invaders from the Arab states as foreign soldiers, nor their own destination as an exile. They considered the move as being to another part of the Arab world, to another place where Arabic was spoken, to a place where they would find their own people, often their own relatives. To move from Acre to Beirut, from Akir to Nablus, was like an American's moving from Cincinnati to Detroit or from Trenton to Boston.”¹⁵⁵

Well before war broke out, one of the motivations for Palestinian Arabs to sell land to Jewish buyers was that some "Arabs wanted to sell land that was geographically situated in the proposed Jewish state.”⁶⁴⁰ The image surrounding the Palestinian Arabs as a people who would by no means leave their land and homes for any reason other than an Israeli machine gun is a false one:

- About 40,000 Arabs are identified as having left Palestine before WWI by their requests for Palestinian citizenship when they decided to come back.²⁰⁰
- "The Arab states' expectation of a massive flight of inhabitants from Palestine was based on the experience of 1936-1939, when tens of thousands of Palestinians fled to Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan during the Arab Revolt.”³²⁰

In 1938 during the middle of the Arab revolt "The great majority of Arabs who had hitherto been prominent in the life of the country and who had not either been deported, excluded from Palestine or detained under Emergency Regulations found it prudent to leave ...”¹²⁵

- "... between 1949 and 1967, when the Jordanian Arab king ruled peacefully in Judea and Samaria, some 400,000 Arabs packed their belongings and left for other parts of the 'Arab world.' Today large numbers of Palestinian Arabs are living and working as ordinary citizens in Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya, and especially prosperous Kuwait. All these countries are home to them.”¹⁵⁰

Footnotes:

¹ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. *Assistance to Palestine Refugees: Report of the Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*. New York: United Nations, 1951.

⁸ Conversely, see *A Sovereign Palestine? No Chance* (Site accessed Dec 02, 2007) where an opposing, yet equally misleading position is maintained that "In 1948, roughly 700,000 Palestinian Arabs ... heeded calls from the Arab world and fled their homes in the newly proclaimed Israel." Notice the insinuation that "roughly 700,000" refugees all just lined up and left town upon receiving their orders.

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⁵⁰ MacKinnon, Ian. *Haifa's Arabs Urged to Flee Rocket Attacks*

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⁶⁰ Emil Ghory, secretary of the Arab High Council, Lebanese daily Al-Telegraph, 6 Sept 1948

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² Atapattu, Don. [*Interview with Middle East Scholar Avi Shlaim: America, Israel and the Middle East*](#) (Site accessed May 18, 2007)

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⁴ <http://www.ifamericansknew.org/about_us/o_s.html> [Internet Archive](#) confirms quote as of Oct 10, 2006)

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